

Statement: DT250

## LOVING THE TRINITY

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### SUMMARY

The Trinity should be the object of our love, for the doctrine expresses the very heart and soul of Scripture's message of redemption. If we wish to have a solid foundation for our faith, we need to learn why this doctrine is central and what it really expresses. We must also be able to recognize denials of the Trinity, whether blatant or subtle, and we must call Christian leaders to account when they allow this central truth of the faith to be undermined and relegated to "debatable" status.

The computer program on my laptop indicated that my music CD had just ended. I had finished listening, again, to "Freedom of the Sea," a new release from Phillips, Craig, and Dean. I was thumbing through J. Lee Grady's article in the June 1997 issue of *Charisma* magazine on Oneness Pentecostalism. I had briefly scanned it when it first came out, for it identified the fundamental differences between historic Trinitarians and Oneness Pentecostals as doctrinal hair-splitting. Moreover, it openly spoke of reconciliation without resolving the theological issue of the Godhead. I was rereading it in preparation for writing this article, and to gain perspective in preparation for my upcoming debate with Oneness Pentecostal scholar Robert Sabin.<sup>1</sup>

As I read, I happened upon a section of the article that listed popular Oneness song writers and performers, showing how such artists have had a deep impact on Trinitarian churches. Then I read this sentence: "The contemporary Christian recording group Phillips, Craig and Dean is composed of three Oneness ministers." I hit the eject button and out popped the CD. I sat there looking at it and pondering what I should learn from this experience. The title on my screen was "Loving the Trinity," and the music I was listening to for edification while writing on this subject was performed by mythology expressed in Greek philosophical terminology!<sup>2</sup> As it turns out, they do hold such beliefs.<sup>3</sup> To understand why this was so disturbing to me, you need to understand something about my faith.

### LOVING THE TRINITY

I love the Trinity. Such a statement strikes many people as strange, rather "out of place." For many Christians, the Trinity is an abstract principle, a confusing and difficult doctrine that they believe, although they are not really sure why in their most honest moments. They know it is important, and they hear people saying it is "definitional" of the Christian faith. Yet the fact of the matter is, outside of singing "Holy, Holy, Holy" in church, little is taught about the relationship of the divine Persons and the Triune nature of God. It is the great forgotten doctrine.

That is why I wrote *The Forgotten Trinity* (Bethany House, 1998), and why I began that book by saying, "I love the Trinity." That single line has caught the attention of almost every person who has reviewed or discussed the book. With those words I set the tone for the rest of the work. It was my desire for my fellow Christians to join me in loving the Trinity, not as an abstract doctrine, but as the very life-giving truth of God. I am *passionate* about the Trinity, because *I love God*, and *I am bound to the revelation of Scripture*. Every Christian needs to understand that statement.

### THE PROBLEM

Why should my words, "I love the Trinity," sound strange to anyone? We hear Christians say things like "I love prophecy" and "I love the Cross." I would like to suggest three reasons why the Trinity is not the object of love and adoration in the church that it should be and will be again by God's mercy.

First, we do not love what we do not understand. I don't love calculus because it is a mystery to me, but I know some people who do (as strange as it seems to me). They love it because they understand it and see in it something wonderful. In the same way, anyone who has been married for years and has grown in his or her relationship knows that what began as a blush of infatuation matures over time as husband and wife learn more about each other. The Scriptures exhort us to grow in the grace *and knowledge* of our Lord Jesus Christ (2 Pet. 3:18), and when we do, we can love Him in an ever deeper way. If we do not know the Trinity, we cannot possibly love the truth the term represents.

Second, we don't see how the Trinity relates to what really matters to us. We will hardly undertake the work necessary to learn this vital truth if we don't see how it is relevant to the gospel, to our lives, to anything that really touches our hearts. Why do theologians say this doctrine is so central, so essential, if, as we think, everyone else seems to get along just fine without ever really understanding it? And if it really is central to the faith, why can't I see how it is related to the gospel or to my worship?

Third, we live in a time when the church is antitheological in its thinking. "Don't give me theology, just give me Jesus" seems to be the watchword, though few realize that as soon as they say "Jesus," they are speaking theology. Entire sections of the modern church are functionally "non-Trinitarian." I did not say "anti-Trinitarian," for that would involve a positive denial of the doctrine. Instead, while maintaining the confession that the Trinity is true, many today *function* as if the Trinity did not exist. It has no impact on their theology, their proclamation, prayer, or worship. Some go so far as to dismiss denials of the Trinity as nonissues. The fact that the Trinity Broadcasting Network can have this word in its name and yet allow men like T.D. Jakes, whose teaching compromises the Trinity, to promote his theology in their network shows how little functional concern there is for the divine truth.

### THE SOLUTION

How do we overcome these barriers? I have three suggestions. First, we need to do some major-league education on what the doctrine actually teaches. There is no good reason why the very doctrine that gives life to all other elements of Christian theology should not be part of the most *basic* instruction given to all believers. Not only should introductory teaching be provided, but we also should hear this truth thundered from the pulpit with regularity, for as the apostle Peter asserts (2 pet. 1:12), Christians need to be reminded of the truth on a regular basis. There is something distinctly nonbiblical in the notion that we always have to be looking for something "new" and "fresh." The truth is always new, fresh, and exciting to the believer in Christ. The "old, old story" is the very lifeblood of the solid Christian's experience by the power of the Holy Spirit.

In the second place, we have to impress on every believer the vital importance of understanding, accepting, and experiencing the truth that God has revealed Himself to be Triune: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. This vital truth guarantees the gospel, the Resurrection, and our approach to God in prayer. It needs to be impressed strongly on the thinking of believers. When we have the central aspects of the faith in order, we have a strong foundation from which to work in establishing the rest of our doctrinal structure. A Christian whose life lacks that foundation and structure is likely to be "blown here and there by every wind of teaching" (Eph. 4:14).

Finally, we have to educate, not with arrogance or pride, but with a passion and fervor born of love for the truth. Infectiously on-fire believers can go a long way in changing a fellowship that is antitheological into one that is in love with truth. Concerned Christians need to voice their disapproval of television networks, ministries, or publishers who tolerate poor theology just to mollify a larger "audience." Dedicated Christians may well find themselves being identified as "unloving," "narrow," or "uncaring," but it is better to face that kind of rejection than to be guilty of not caring about God's truth. The Lord's opinion is all that really matters.

### THE TRINITY: A BRIEF DEFINITION

No discussion can take place that does not begin with solid definitions. In many instances when faithful Christians attempt to explain and defend their belief in the Trinity, it is the lack of solid, meaningful definitions that leads them to frustration. *Always remember that it is far more likely than not that non-Christians have an erroneous idea of what the Trinity actually means.* It is better to assume that you will need to explain the most basic elements of the doctrine to them. It is then a pleasant surprise when you encounter someone who actually understands the teaching.

I have found the following definition communicates what needs to be said with the greatest clarity: **Within the one Being that is God, there exist eternally three coequal and coeternal Persons, namely, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit.**

Each word of this definition is important. Each term carries weight and cannot be ignored. These few words present the three great foundations of the Christian doctrine of the Trinity: monotheism, the existence of three divine Persons, and the equality of those Persons.

The phrase “one Being” communicates the truth that there is only one true God, the Creator of all things. The Trinity is purely monotheistic. It is not, however, *Unitarian*. Monotheism speaks to the truth that there is only one *Being* of God, while Unitarianism asserts the heresy that only one *Person* is essential to the Being of God.

The *Being* of God is what makes God, God. It is the substance<sup>4</sup> of God. When we speak of such things, we are entering into the discussion of *ontology*, the study of “being.” God’s being is eternal (i.e., not limited by both time and omnipresent (not limited by space). In this matter God is utterly unique. Human beings are limited by both time and space. It is here that we encounter the vast chasm that separates the Creator from all creation. God is infinite in His being, while all creatures are, by nature, limited.

It is vitally important that we recognize the difference between the words *Being* and *Person*. The failure to recognize that the definition given above is using these two terms in different ways is one of the prime reasons for confusion in regard to the Trinity. *Being* is what makes something *what* it is. *Person* is what makes someone *who* he or she is. As Hank Hanegraaff puts it, when speaking of the Trinity, we speak of one *what* (the Being of God) and three *whos* (the three divine Persons). Most cultic rejections of the Trinity focus on blurring this distinction.

We speak of these three divine Persons as coequal and coeternal. The Father has eternally been the Father, and the Son has eternally been the Son. The terms *Father* and *Son* refer to an eternal relationship that they have with each other. It is vitally important to understand that this relationship has always been. If we neglect to recognize this fact, we run the danger of thinking that the Father *precedes* or *creates* the Son, when this is not the case. While theologians speak of the Father *begetting* the Son, they do so in such a way that completely denies that the Son is a *creation* of, or *ontologically inferior* to, the Father. Each of the divine Persons shares fully and completely in the divine Being, but they likewise bear a relationship to one another within the Godhead itself. Many arguments raised against the Trinity actually focus on the relationship between the Persons, as if these automatically indicate an *inferiority of nature*. We do well to recognize this kind of error in the arguments of those who oppose the Christian faith.

The final assertion of our definition comprises the deity of Christ and the deity and personality of the Holy Spirit. Of course, Jehovah’s Witnesses and other groups vociferously attack both of these truths. Many of our conversations of the Trinity focus on this particular area.

The key element in successfully explaining and defending the Trinity is to recognize that the doctrine is based on the plain teaching of Scripture. Citing the above discussion of such terms as *ontology* or *internal relationships of the Godhead*, someone might insist that such phrases are inherently unbiblical. Yet, as we shall see, that is not the case. We can never afford to abandon the only ground upon which the Christian apologist can stand — the teaching of God’s Word. Each of the three foundations of the doctrine are clear teachings of the Bible, and we must focus our defense there, if we wish to honor God and give a God-glorifying answer to those who ask.

**Foundation One:.....Monotheism: There Is Only One God.**  
**Foundation Two:.....There Are Three Divine Persons.**  
**Foundation Three:.....The Persons Are Co-Equal and Co-Eternal.**

### WHEN TRUTH IS DENIED

When any one of these truths is denied, the *biblical* revelation of God is destroyed. For example, when one denies monotheism, the result is rank polytheism, even when covered over with a thin varnish of Christian terminology. This error can be especially seen in the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints (the Mormons). When one denies the equality and eternality of the Persons, subordinationism naturally results, seen with stark clarity in the Watchtower Bible and Tract Society (Jehovah’s Witnesses).

More subtle is the denial of the truth that there are three divine Persons — the Father, the Son, and the Spirit. The denial of this truth leads to modalism. In the most popular form taken by modalism today, Oneness theology insists that there is one Person (that is, Unitarianism) who *manifests* Himself as Father in creation, Son in redemption, and

Spirit in emanation or regeneration. The Son of God then becomes the flesh that is indwelt by the Father. All those passages that teach the unique and personal relationship between the Father and the Son prior to the Incarnation are explained away, always in violation of their context and original intent.<sup>5</sup>

For some reason many feel that there is a hierarchy of “error” when it comes to the Trinity. It is *really* bad to be a polytheist. It is fairly bad to be a subordinationist such as the Jehovah’s Witnesses. Yet, if you are going to be an anti-Trinitarian heretic, you might as well be a Oneness advocate. Or so many think. It just sounds *closer* than the others. They often speak of the truth that there is only one God and of the deity of Christ, but the fact of the matter is, heresy is heresy. A direct denial of any one of these biblical truths is just as serious as any other. We are to worship God in spirit and in truth, and two-thirds of the truth is not a valid substitute, no matter which one-third of His truth we choose to reject.

### A KEY ISSUE

Some Christians struggle with the fact that the Trinity is not a term that appears in Scripture. Why should we believe a doctrine that is not specifically stated in some sort of creedal manner in the Bible? Why don’t we find a nice, simple definition of the Trinity in Scripture?<sup>6</sup> Were the early Christians “Trinitarians”? Some say *no*. I beg to differ.

One of the most important truths to grasp about the Bible’s revelation of the Trinity is that the truth of the Trinity is revealed primarily in *acts* of God — specifically, in the Incarnation of Jesus Christ and in the coming of the Holy Spirit to indwell the church. The greatest proof that God is Triune is found in the ministry, death, burial, and resurrection of the Son of God and in the coming of the Spirit. These events took place *between* the writing of the Old and New Testaments. The Old Testament contains predictions and glimpses of what comes into clear view only in the ministry of Christ recorded in the New Testament. In the same way the Trinity is revealed *before* the writing of the New Testament so that is written *by Trinitarians for Trinitarians*. The apostle Peter, for example, had personally *experienced* the Trinity, for he had heard the Father speak from heaven, had walked with the Son, and was then indwelt by the Holy Spirit. B.B. Warfield observed: “We may understand also, however, from the same central fact, why it is that the doctrine of the Trinity lies in the New Testament rather in the form of allusions than in express teaching, why it is rather everywhere presupposed, coming only here and there into incidental expression, than formally inculcated. It is because the revelation, having been made in the actual occurrences of redemption, was already the common property of all Christian hearts.”<sup>7</sup>

The Trinity is found in the New Testament in the exact form we would expect it to take. When people who share a common belief and heritage communicate with one another they do not reiterate all the foundational truths that they already share each time they speak. Instead, their shared beliefs come out not so much in creedal expressions, but in allusions and common terminology. Note the words of the following passages and see how easily, and how often, the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit come together in a manner utterly incongruous *if* these writers did not view them in a Trinitarian fashion:

Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit (Matt. 28:19).<sup>8</sup>

But we should always give thanks to God for you, brethren beloved by the Lord, because God has chosen you from the beginning for salvation through sanctification by the Spirit and faith in the truth (2 Thess. 2:13).

Now there are varieties of gifts, but the same Spirit. And there are varieties of ministries, and the same Lord. And there are varieties of effects, but the same God who works all things in all persons (1 Cor. 12:4–6).

Now He who establishes us with you in Christ and anointed us is God, who also sealed us and gave us the Spirit in our hearts as a pledge (2 Cor. 1:21–22).

The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit, be with you all (2 Cor. 13:14).

...to be a minister of Christ Jesus to the Gentiles, ministering as a priest of gospel of God, that my offering of the Gentiles might become acceptable, sanctified by the Holy Spirit (Rom. 15:16).

There is one body and one Spirit, just as also you were called in one hope of your calling; one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all who is over all and through all and in all (Eph. 4:4–6).<sup>9</sup>

We should not underestimate the importance of such passages. Down through the centuries, Christians have recognized that if the New Testament writers were willing to join Father, Son, and Spirit together in such a manner, it proves they held the highest concept of the deity and authority of each. One does not join mere creatures with God in speaking, for example, of the accomplishment of salvation. One does not say, “The grace of Michael the Archangel, and the love of Jehovah, and the fellowship of God’s impersonal active force be with you all.” Yet this is exactly how subordinationists such as Jehovah’s Witnesses must understand these passages.

Meanwhile, we still must consider the question of using nonbiblical terminology to describe a biblical truth. The real question is: What is most important, the truth taught by Scripture or the use of only the words of Scripture to express that truth? If we express a truth of Scripture by use of words not used by scriptural writers, are we in some way compromising Scripture? Certainly not. The issue is whether the truth so expressed is, in fact in harmony with the Scriptures. Just as “justification by grace through faith alone without meritorious works” is an accurate, proper summary of the biblical teaching on salvation, though the exact phrase itself does not appear in Scripture, so too “one God in three Persons” is the *only* possible conclusion derived from a study of Scripture *alone* and *all* of Scripture. John Calvin dealt with this issue: “Now, although the heretics rail at the word ‘person,’ or certain squeamish men cry out against admitting a term fashioned by the human mind, they cannot shake our conviction that three are spoken of, each of which is entirely God, yet that there is not more than one God. What wickedness, then, it is to disapprove of words that explain nothing else than what is attested and sealed by Scripture!”<sup>10</sup>

### WHY IT MATTERS

Without the Trinity, you have no gospel. Surprised by that assertion? Many today present the gospel to unbelievers without ever mentioning the Triune God, so how can I say the gospel and the Trinity are inextricably linked? If some seem to manage without it, why complicate things?

In reality, no one has ever presented the gospel without referring to the Trinity. Whenever we quote John 3:16, “For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son,” we are referring to the Trinity, for such a passage assumes the existence, deity, and power of the Father and the existence, separate personhood, and ministry of the Son. If we quote Paul’s words in Romans 3:24 to speak of the great truth of justification by grace: “being justified as a gift by His grace through the redemption which is in Christ Jesus,” we again assume the mercy and grace of the Father and the perfection of the redeeming work of Christ. No matter what reference we make to the gospel, we cannot avoid dealing with the nature of God.

When we baptize, we do so in the name of the Triune God: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. When we celebrate the Lord’s Supper, we remember the One who was sent by the Father into the world, and we do so by the power of the Holy Spirit. Christianity is inherently Trinitarian. Remove the loving Father — fount of salvation, the redeeming Son — sacrifice for sins, and the indwelling Spirit — Comforter and Advocate, and you have nothing left but ritual and rule — another less-than-unique religious system.

Think of what it would mean, for example, to have a nondivine Savior. Put yourself in the position of the Jehovah’s Witness who believes Christ is Michael the created Archangel, or the Mormon who believes Him to be the first begotten spiritchild of Elohim (God the Father), the literal brother of us all (and of Lucifer as well!). Can you imagine trusting another created being for your eternal salvation? Can you picture yourself enraptured in worshiping such a fellow creature? Surely not. The very idea of giving the honor and glory that is due to God alone to any created being caused the redeemed heart to recoil in horror. Yet, to speak of Christ in the words of Scripture is to praise and honor Him as God. Jesus Himself said all are to “honor the Son, even as they honor the Father” (John 5:23). It is natural for us to do this, because we know that only a truly divine redeemer could provide for us the perfect salvation promised in the Bible.

The centrality of this truth to the proclamation of the gospel is well illustrated by the stirring words an ancient Christian penned and preached more than 1,800 years ago. In a sermon on the Passover, Melito, bishop of Sardis, said:

*And so he was lifted up upon a tree and an inscription was attached indicating who was being killed. Who was it? It is a grievous thing to tell, but a most fearful thing to refrain from telling. But listen, as you tremble before him on whose account the earth trembled!*  
*He who hung the earth in place is hanged.*  
*He who fixed the heavens in place is fixed in place.*  
*He who made all things fast is made fast on a tree.*  
*The Sovereign is insulted.*  
*God is murdered.*  
*The King of Israel is destroyed by an Israelite hand.*

*This is the One who made the heavens and the earth,  
and formed mankind in the beginning,  
The One proclaimed by the Law and the Prophets,  
The One enfleshed in a virgin,  
The One hanged on a tree,  
The One buried in the earth,  
The One raised from the dead  
and who went up into the heights of heaven,  
The One sitting at the right hand of the Father,  
The One having all authority to judge and save,  
Through Whom the Father made the things which exist  
from the beginning of time.  
This One is "the Alpha and the Omega,"  
This One is "the beginning and the end"  
—the beginning indescribable and the end  
incomprehensible.  
This One is the Christ.  
This One is the King.  
This One is Jesus.  
This One is the Leader.  
This One is the Lord.  
This One is the One who rose from the dead.  
This One is the One sitting on the right hand of the Father.  
He bears the Father and is borne by the Father.  
"To him be the glory and the power forever.  
Amen."<sup>11</sup>*

### **WEEDING OUT THE FALSE TEACHERS**

Most Christians are able to recognize the cultic nature of such groups as the Watchtower Bible and Tract Society, the Way International, and the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. The ways in which they deny and attack the Trinity are well known and obvious. Yet, when it comes to people who are "closer" to the truth, we often fail to hold *them* to the same standard.

Trinity Broadcasting Network (TBN) should change its name. Not only are many of the programs on the network functionally non-Trinitarian (i.e., the doctrine makes no impact upon their doctrinal stance), but there is also a networkwide willingness to entertain blatant deviations from the truth of God's triune existence. One will often find T.D. Jakes preaching on the network, even though his confession of faith is modalistic, not Trinitarian, in terminology. He eschews the term "Persons" and prefers, instead, the favorite phrase of the Oneness Pentecostals; three "manifestations."<sup>12</sup> He likewise uses Oneness terminology when he says, "We have one God, but He is Father in creation, Son in redemption, and Holy Spirit in regeneration."<sup>13</sup>

In the same way, Jesse DuPlantis is allowed to present his mystical trips to heaven on TBN without anyone pointing out that what he claims to have seen is in direct contradiction to the biblical doctrine of the Trinity. *Someone* should speak up and say that DuPlantis is flying directly in the face of scriptural truth when he claims to have seen "Jesus come out of Jehovah-Elohim-God" and then to have discovered that the Holy Spirit was a separate deity who was not in heaven but on earth.<sup>14</sup> Many today are afraid to contradict "spiritual experiences" on the basis of Scripture, as if someone's experience is more authoritative than the Word of God!

None of this should be especially surprising to us, given the statements of TBN's leader, Paul Crouch. When speaking to Benny Hinn on 23 October 1992, Crouch said:

*Let's talk a little bit about theology now. These are issues that I consider to be up for debate, discussion, within the broad spectrum of the body of Christ. You don't have total agreement on, for example, the Trinity. There is a group, the Jesus Only group, or the Oneness group that believes that there's only one Person — anyway, we won't get into that deeply, into the doctrinal aspect, but you have been attacked on some statements that you have made concerning the Trinity and the members of the Godhead [i.e., that they are three Gods].*

When the Trinity becomes something that is “up for debate,” the foundations have collapsed and a vacuum of truth is created. Anything and its uncle will rush in to fill the vacuum, which might explain the wide variety of doctrinal views expressed on TBN.

So what am I going to do with that CD? If I am consistent, I will retire it from the active list of titles heard on my CD player. Why? The music is still pretty, exciting, even touching. Nevertheless, it is about the Christian faith, and when the performers deny the very truth that *defines* that faith *by their own confession*, that fact will always enter into my thinking as I listen.

It is all a matter of priorities. I don't spend time watching TBN because I don't believe non-Trinitarians can teach me about the Christian faith, nor do I believe those who do not have a firm grasp of the doctrine and its centrality are particularly qualified to be involved in Christian ministry. Likewise, I don't believe it is proper to be led in worship by someone who worships a different God than I do and who specifically denies the truth of the Triune existence of God. One would think that theological orthodoxy would be the first and foremost requirement of a worship leader. Indeed, how can one lead us to worship God when that person does not have a true knowledge of the Almighty? Far too often one's ability to sing, play an instrument, or write a song is more important than the content of his or her teaching, theology, and doctrine. And our worship reflects it.

Why should we be concerned about understanding, and loving, the Trinity? To be consistent and honest in our worship and witness, we must know who God is, and how God has revealed Himself to us. We must acknowledge the Father, the Son, and the Spirit, as Scripture has revealed them to be related to one another and to us. *If the Bible is truly God-breathed, then we must worship God in Trinity and Trinity in Unity. This is the plain verdict of the entire Bible. This is how God has revealed Himself, and we must love Him in truth. That truth is expressed in the words of the great hymn, “God in three Persons, blessed Trinity.” Let us, then, bless our majestic God! And let us more and more love the truth that is the Trinity!*

## Notes

- 1 This debate on the Trinity is available from Alpha and Omega Ministries: P.O. Box 37106, Phoenix, AZ 85069; [www.aomin.org](http://www.aomin.org).
- 2 For example, Nathaniel Urshan, while debating Walter Martin and E. Calvin Beisner on the *John Ankerberg Show* in 1985, said, “We believe the doctrine of the Trinity was a product of pagan mythology and Grecian philosophy.” (*Defending the Faith*, vol. II — 1985, Program Transcripts of the John Ankerberg show.) Moreover, the leading Oneness scholar, David Bernard, has said, “The Bible does not teach the doctrine of the trinity, and trinitarianism actually contradicts the Bible. It does not add any positive benefit to the Christian message...” (David Bernard, *The Oneness of God* [Hazelwood, MO: Word Aflame Press, 1985], 298.)
- 3 Sadly, my research confirmed that Phillips, Craig, and Dean do indeed hold the Oneness position. For example, on the Web sit of *The World of Pentecost* from Austin, Texas, the home church of Randy Phillips, we read, “The One Almighty God manifested Himself as a Father in creation, as a Son in redemption, and the Holy Ghost in regeneration” (<http://www.wop.com/lessons/chap8b.htm#Three> In One). Likewise, a little later, this explanation of Jesus' prayer life (a constant and glaring contradiction of Oneness teaching) is offered: “A rule which may be followed to simplify this is: *The Son of God refers to the flesh of God, and God, or the Father, refers to the Spirit.*” This then leads to: “You may make this substitution in your mind as you read certain scriptures; flesh for Son, and Spirit for God (Father). For example: ‘For God (THE SPIRIT) so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son (FLESH), that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life’ (John 3:16).” The denial of the eternal nature of the Son is plainly seen. The badly errant assertion is made: “The Roman emperor Constantine in the year 325 A.D.

incorporated the ‘doctrine of the trinity’ into the Catholic Church where it has remained ever since, and most Protestant churches have accepted this doctrine without thorough examination. The ‘trinity,’ however, generates confusion and is not in total harmony with the Scriptures.” Likewise, the Web site of Dan Dean’s church proclaims classic Oneness teaching: “There is One True God that has manifested Himself as Father in creation, Son in redemption and the Holy Spirit in emanation” (<http://www.christ-temple.org/about.html>).

- 4 Theologians use Greek and Latin terms such as *ousia* (substance) or *essentia* (essence) to attempt to communicate how the *Being* of God differs from the three divine *Persons*.
- 5 Just a few of these would include John 1:1, 17:5, and Philippians 2:6.
- 6 Some might point to the KJV rendering of 1 John 5:7 as such a definition, but the passage does not appear in any ancient Greek manuscript, and it came into the KJV through the Latin Vulgate. While a correct summary, it has no claim to being the original writing of the apostle John.
- 7 B.B. Warfield, “The Biblical Doctrine of the Trinity,” *The Works of Benjamin B. Warfield* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1981), 145.
- 8 Scripture quotations are from the New American Standard Bible.
- 9 See also 1 Thessalonians 1:3–5, Romans 14:17–18, Colossians 1:6–8, Ephesians 2:18, 3:16–17, 1 Corinthians 2:2–5 and 6:11.
- 10 John Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion* 1:13:3, in the *John Calvin Collection CD-Rom* (Ages Software, 1998).
- 11 Personal translation.
- 12 “Ministry Beliefs” taken from Jakes’s Web site, [www.tdjakes.net/ministry/believe.htm](http://www.tdjakes.net/ministry/believe.htm)
- 13 “Living by the Word” radio program audio clip, KKLA 99.5 FM with host Pastor John Coleman, 19 August 1998.
- 14 Jesse DuPlantis, *Close Encounters of the God Kind* (New Orleans, LA: Jesse DuPlantis Ministries; audiotape transcript).